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LATIN AMERICA

Chileans Act to Prevent Incident with US

The military government in Chile has chosen to avoid a possible diplomatic incident with the US at this time by allowing three American nuns to leave the country after they had secretly aided wounded terrorists.

The government also has agreed to grant safe conduct to an American priest similarly involved.

The terrorists, including the two top leaders of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, have sought asylum in two embassies.

The chances for additional diplomatic and political complications are high, since a British missionary doctor and a US-

born Chilean priest are in custody in Chile for aiding the terrorists; other members of the clergy are being sought by security forces.

Chile's attitude on the American nuns probably was designed in part to encourage a US abstention on a UN resolution condemning Chile for human rights abuses.

Pinochet clearly would like to avoid forcing an open split with the Catholic Church. Continued Chilean or foreign clerical involvement with terrorists, even on humanitarian grounds, may well provoke a sterner government response in the future.

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